



News Release

For Immediate Release
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Influenza Vaccine Available for 2003-04 Season

Public clinics starting in October

(Salt Lake City, UT) – For the first time in several years Utah will have ample supply of influenza vaccine beginning the flu vaccination season and the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) urges Utahns to get flu shots as soon as they are available.

About 85.5 million doses of flu vaccine are now available and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have suspended its recommendation that high-risk groups get vaccinated first. “Anyone can get their flu shot beginning in October and throughout the season as long as vaccine is available,” says Linda Abel, UDOH Immunization Program Manager.

Abel says there is a new vaccine this year that gives people a vaccination option without a needle. The FDA recently approved a new nasal spray influenza vaccine (Flu Mist) for healthy persons aged 5–49 years of age. Not all clinics will have the new vaccine. Abel recommends checking with your health care provider to see if they have Flu Mist.

Some groups of people are more likely to become seriously ill from influenza and should get the influenza vaccine soon, in October or November. High-risk groups include:

- Those with chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, heart disease, or those with suppressed immune systems (such as cancer patients or those with AIDS)
- Persons over the age of 65
- Those living in long-term care facilities
- Healthcare workers
- Women who will be more than 3 months pregnant during flu season
- Household contacts and others who can transmit influenza to those at high risk

- MORE -

Page 2 of 2 -- Influenza Vaccine Available for 2003-04 Season

- In addition, influenza vaccination is also recommended for healthy children from 6 to 23 months of age as well as for people over the age of 50.

Children less than 9 years of age who receive vaccine for the first time need a booster dose one month after the first dose. Parents should check with their health care provider to discuss annual influenza vaccination of healthy children in these age groups.

According to the CDC, influenza causes approximately 36,000 deaths and 114,000 hospitalizations each year in the United States. More than 90 percent of deaths occur among people age 65 and older.

Utah's flu season typically runs from November through March with most cases occurring in January and February. The UDOH encourages health care providers to continue vaccinating through December or later, as long as vaccine is available. It takes about two weeks after vaccination to develop protection.

Abel reminds Utahns that antibiotics are not effective against the flu and misusing them can lead to stronger, more resistant bugs. She recommends talking to your health care provider about using over-the-counter medicines like decongestants, cough-syrups, and pain relievers to reduce flu symptoms.

For more information on where to get the influenza vaccine, contact your health care provider, local health department or call the Utah Immunization Hotline at 1-800-275-0659.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.